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WHY NOT CANCEL PENDING BOARD EXAMS, SC ASKS CBSE

The top court directs the board to decide if students could be assessed on the basis of performance in internal exams

EXAMS IN JULY COULD PUT LIVES AT RISK

The court was hearing a plea filed by parents of children who have been affected by the postponement of exams due to Covid-19. The Board had, last month, announced that it will hold the exams between July 1 and 15. But, citing the AIIMS data, the petitioners argued that the pandemic would be at its peak in July and holding the exams then would be risky

DECISION SOON, ASSURES BOARD

- The petitioners accused the board of discrimination as it cancelled the pending exams in about 250 schools abroad and decided to assess the students there on the basis of past exams
- The CBSE informed the court that in light of safety concerns, it'll soon take an appropriate decision on the remaining 29 exams

June 23

IS WHEN THE CBSE WILL INFORM THE COURT OF ITS DECISION

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INDIA CAN GIVE FITTING REPLY, ASSERTS PM

All 3 Forces on full alert; Modi calls all-party meeting on Friday; Jaishankar tells Chinese counterpart attack can impact bilateral ties

PUSHKAR BANAKAR & MAYANK SINGH @New Delhi

A day after 20 Indian soldiers were killed in the Galwan Valley along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) following a violent stand-off with Chinese troops, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday paid homage to them and said India wants peace, but will give a befitting reply if provoked.

Hours later, leaves sanctioned to all armed forces personnel were cancelled and all three services put on high alert. The Army has already sent additional troops and arms to its key frontline bases and formations along the LAC.

"I would like to assure the nation that the sacrifice of our jawans will not be in vain. For us, the sovereignty of the country is most important. India wants peace but it is capable of giving a befitting reply if instigated," Modi said. He also called an all-party meeting on Friday evening to discuss the situation at the border.

Speaking for the first time on the stand-off while interacting with chief ministers, Modi said India never provokes anyone. "But whenever needed, we have demonstrated our strength, proving our capabilities in protecting and defending the integrity and sovereignty of the country. Sacrifice and endurance are part of our national character. At the same time, bravery and valour are equally part of it," Modi said.

Earlier in the day, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said his country does not want more conflicts with India. "From our side, we do not want more clashes with India," he said.

Zhao's remarks came hours before External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar held a telephonic conversation with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi. According to a statement from the Ministry of External Affairs, Jaishnakar registered India's protest against the stand-off and warned it could have serious impact on bilateral ties.

"The need of the hour was for the Chinese side to reassess its actions and take corrective steps. The two sides should scrupulously and sincerely implement the understanding that was reached by the Senior Commanders on 6th June. Troops should strictly respect and observe the Line of Actual Control and should not take any unilateral action to alter it," the statement read.

The Chinese statement, however, accused the Indian troops of deviating from the June 6 agreement.

The division commander meeting, which was initially suspended, took place after the foreign ministers' telephone call but was inconclusive. P9

Family members pay respects to Colonel Santosh Babu as his mortal remains reach Hyderabad on Wednesday

A satellite photo of the Galwan Valley area taken a day after the deadly clash | AP

The spot where 20 Indian soldiers were killed in clashes with Chinese troops on Monday night

HOW IT HAPPENED

1. Tents and surveillance post set up by PLA on a mountain trail on the Indian side of LAC triggered violence
2. The Indian side, led by Col B Santosh Babu, strongly objected to them and tried to remove the tents
3. The basic objection was there could be no structure as June 6 pact described the area as buffer zone
4. A small group of Chinese troops reacted angrily, but soon retreated to their side of the LAC
5. They returned soon after with more troops in full riot gear and attacked the Indian soldiers
6. By then, more Indian soldiers had come in and were attempting to clear the Chinese encroachment
7. As both sides clashed, a portion of the road caved in. Some Indian and Chinese soldiers fell into Galwan river
8. Initially, a few Indians were captured by the Chinese, but were released later. India lost 20 soldiers

China failed to honour buffer zone pact in Galwan region

MAYANK SINGH & PUSHKAR BANAKAR @New Delhi

THE violence that erupted on Monday in the Galwan region at Patrolling Point 14 was tied to China failing to honour the agreement on June 6 that the area would be a buffer zone.

A senior Army officer said, "The soldiers were attacked when the Local Commanding Officer had gone to confirm the moving back of Chinese troops from the location on the banks of the Galwan river." The Chinese were expected to dismantle their tents in the zone.

At the Corps Commanders meeting on June 6, it was decided to create buffer zones to begin with, and this was to be followed by a phased withdrawal.

Confirming the disengagement plan, Army Chief General M M Naravane had said on June 13 that it will take place in a "phased manner" along the contested LAC. The withdrawal agreement did not include the stand-off point at Finger 4 along the Northern Flank of the Pangong Tso Lake.

In his first comment after the stand-off began, the Army Chief said, "I would like to assure everyone that the situation along our border with China is under control," adding both sides were disengaging in a phased manner. "We have started from the north, from the area of the Galwan river, where a lot of disengagement has taken place."

In its statement, the MEA said: "While there was some progress (on de-escalation), the Chinese side sought to erect a structure in Galwan Valley on our side of the LAC. While this became a source of dispute, the Chinese side took pre-meditated and planned action that was directly responsible for the resulting violence and casualties... It reflected an intent to change the facts on ground in violation of all our agreements to not change the status quo."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday stands with folded hands honouring the sacrifices made by Indian soldiers on the border with China | PTI

Another nationwide lockdown ruled out

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @New Delhi

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesay advised chief ministers to prepare for the next phase of unlocking the country, dispelling rumours of a fresh round of nationwide lockdown in the wake of the Covid pandemic. He also sought their help is addressing emotional challenges associated with the outbreak, including stigma.

Modi clearly said there would be no more fresh nationwide lockdown while asking the chief ministers to speed up economic activities. "We now need to think about Unlock Phase II and how to minimise all possibilities of harm to our people," the PM said. He urged the states to take steps to boost infrastructure and construction-related activities.

Dwelling on the emotional aspect, he said, "We have to find ways by which we can pull our citizens out of the stigma born out of the fear of the virus." He underlined that the number of people who have recovered from the infection is high and is increasing rapidly. Therefore, those who contract Covid-19 need not panic, he added.

Fifteen chief ministers, including those of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Bihar took part in Wednesday's virtual discussion. The PM stressed the need to ramp up testing. The CMs were urged to utilise the existing testing capacity to the maximum while working on expanding them.

The CMs sought to draw the Centre's attention towards focusing on beefing up of key health infrastructure.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah, in his brief remarks, said that the battle against the pandemic is still not over and utmost precaution must be taken.

We're ready to open up fully, BSY tells PM

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

A confident Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa on Wednesday told Prime Minister Narendra Modi that Karnataka is ready to completely lift the lockdown, but with some restrictions in place. Apprising the PM on Karnataka's handling of Covid-19 so far, Yediyurappa said the state is already equipped to handle one lakh cases and is in the process of doubling its facilities.

The Karnataka Government is said to be keen on lifting restrictions on time, travel, services etc., while discussions on reopening of schools and colleges are under way.

The CM is said to have conveyed to Modi that the state, despite a steady spike in cases, is set to end lockdown while retaining some restrictions in line with social distancing norms and mandatory precautionary measures. P8

4IK REGISTER

Return of the native: State looks to boost skills

FILE PHOTO

ASHWINI M SRIPAD @Bengaluru

KARNATAKA is prepared for the rush of the returnees. As the number of those returning to the state has begun to swell, the government is ready with its skill updating and employment generation programme.

About 41,000 people who returned to Karnataka from other states and countries have registered their names with the Karnataka Skill Development Department and are interested in taking up agriculture, construction and work in the tourism sector.

The department, which is aiming to solve the unemployment problem of the returnees, told them to register giving details like if they need special training, their education qualification, etc.

There are close to 40 options including agriculture, handicrafts, logistics, food processing, and hospitality, among others.

Speaking to *The New Indian Express*, Deputy CM and Skill Development Minister Dr C N Ashwath Narayan said since they expected a huge rush, they started the process last month itself. "Of the 41,000 registered people, 7,000 are from outside India, mainly from the Middle Eastern countries, who have lost their jobs due to the corona crisis and economic slowdown," he said. P7

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